

for of an hundred, certeynly,
Nor of a thousand ful scarsly,
Ne shal they fynde unnethis oon,
Whan povertie is comen upon.
for this fortune that I of telle,
With men whan hir lust to dwelle,
Makith hem to lese hir conisaunce,
And nourishith hem in ignoraunce.
BUT froward fortune and perverse,
Whan high estatis she doth reverse,
And maketh hem to tumble down
Of hir whele, with sodeyn tourn,
And from hir richesse doth hem flee,
And plongeth hem in povertie,
As a stepmoder envious,
And leyeth a plastre dolorous
Unto her hertis, wounded egre,
Which is not tempred with vinegre,
But with povertie and indigence,
for to shewe, by experience,
That she is fortune verely
In whom no man shulde affy,
Nor in hir yefftis have fiance,
She is so ful of variaunce.
Thus can she maken high and lowe,
Whan they from richesse aren throwe,
fully to knowen, withouten were,
freend of effect, and freend of chere;
And which in love weren trew and stable,
And whiche also weren variable,
After fortune, hir goddessse,
In povertie, outhen in richesse;
for al she yeveth, out of drede,
Anhappe bereveth it in dede;
for Infortune lat not oon
Of freendis, whan fortune is goon;
Imene tho freendis that wol flee
Anoon as entreth povertie.
And yet they wol not leve hem so,
But in ech place where they go
They calle hem Wrecche, scorne and blame,
And of hir mishappe hem diffame,
And, namely, siche as in richesse
Pretendith most of stablenesse,
Whan that they sawe him set onlofte,
And weren of him socoured ofte,
And most yholpe in al hir nede:
But now they take no maner hede,
But seyn, in voice of flaterie,
That now apperith hir folye,
Overal whereso they fare,
And singe: Go, farewell feldefare.
Alle suche freendis I beshrewe,
for of the trewe ther be to fewe;
But sothfast freendis, what so bityde,
In every fortune wolen abyde;
They han hir hertis in suche noblesse
That they nil love for no richesse;
Nor, for that fortune may hem sende,
They wolen hem socoure and defende;
And chaunge for softe ne for sore,
for who is freend, loveth evermore.
Though men drawe swerd his freend to slo,

He may not hewe hir love atwo.
BUT, in the case that I shal sey,
for pride and ire lese it he may,
And for reprove by nycetee,
And discovering of privitee,
With tonge wounding, as feloun,
Thurgh venemous detraccioun,
frend in this case wol gon his way,
for nothing greve him more ne may;
And for nought ellis wol he flee,
If that he love in stabilitie.
And certeyn, he is wel bigoon
Among a thousand that fyndith oon.
for ther may be no richesse,
Ageyns frendship, of worthinesse;
for it ne may so high atteigne
As may the valoure, sooth to seyne,
Of him that loveth trew and wel;
frendship is more than is catel.
for freend in court ay better is
Than peny in his purs, certis;
And fortune, mishapping,
Whan upon men she is falling,
Thurgh misturning of hir chaunce,
And casteth hem oute of balaunce,
She makith, thurgh hir adversitee,
Men ful clerly for to see
him that is freend in existence
from him that is by apparence.
for Infortune makith anoon
To knowe thy freendis fro thy foon,
By experience, right as it is;
The which is more to preysse, ywis,
Than is miche richesse and tresour;
for more doth profit and valour
Povertie, and such adversitee,
Bifore than doth prosperitee;
for the toon yeveth conisaunce,
And the tother ignoraunce.
AND thus in povertie is in dede
Trouthe declared fro falsehede;
for feynthe freendis it wol declare,
And trewe also, what wey they fare.
for whan he was in his richesse,
These freendis, ful of doublenesse,
Offrid him in many wyse
Hert and body, and servyse.
What wolde he than ha yeve to ha bought
To knowen openly her thought,
That he now hath so clerly seen?
The lasse bigyled he sholde have been
And he hadde than perceyved it,
But richesse nold not late him wit.
Wel more avauntage doth him than,
Sith that it makith him a wys man,
The greet mischeef that he receyvethe,
Than doth richesse that him deceyvethe.
Richesse riche ne makith nought
him that on tresour set his thought;
for richesse stont in suffisaunce
And nothing in habundaunce;
for suffisaunce alonly
Makith men to live richely.

for he that hath but miche tweyne,
Ne more value in his demaigne,
Liveth more at ese, and more is riche,
Than doth he that is so chiche,
And in his bren bath, soth to seyn,
An hundred muwis of whete greyn,
Though he be chapman or marchaunt,
And have of golde many besaunt.
for in the geting he hath such wo,
And in the keping drede also,
And set evermore his bisynesse
for to encrease, and not to lesse,
for to augment and multiply.
And though on hepis it lye him by,
Yet never shal make his richesse
Haseeth unto his gredinesse.
But the powe that rechith nought,
Save of his lyfode, in his thought,
Which that he getith with his travaile,
He dredith nought that it shal faille,
Though he have lytel worldis good,
Meete and drinke, and esy food,
Upon his travel and living,
And also suffisaunt clothing.
Or if in syknesse that he falle,
And lothe mete and drink withalle,
Though he have nought, his mete to by,
He shal bithinke him hastely,
To putte him out of al daunger,
That he of mete hath no mister;
Or that he may with litel eke
Be founden, whyl that he is seke;
Or that men shul him bere in hast,
To live, til his syknesse be past,
To somme maysondewe bityde;
He cast nought what shal him bityde.
He thenkith nought that ever he shal
into any syknesse falle.
AND though it falle, as it may be,
That al betyme spare shal he
As moche as shal to him suffice,
Whyl he is syke in any wyse,
He doth it, for that he wol be
Content with his povertie
Withoute nede of any man.
So miche in litel have he can,
He is apayed with his fortune;
And for he nil be importune
Unto no wight, ne onerous,
Nor of hir goodes covetous;
Therefore he spareth, it may wel been,
his pore estat for to sustene.
Rif him lust not for to spare,
But suffrith forth, as nought ne ware,
Atte last it hapneth, as it may,
Right unto his laste day,
And taketh the world as it wolde be;
for ever in herte thenkith he,
The soner that the deeth him slo,
To paradys the soner go
He shal, there for to live in blisse,
Where that he shal no good misse.
Thider he hopith God shal him sende

Aftir his wrecchid lyves ende.
Pictagoras himsilf rehereses,
In a book that the Golden Verses
Is clepid, for the nobilitee
Of the honourable ditee:
EHAN, whan thou gost thy body fro,
free in the air thou shalt up go,
And leven al humanitee,
And purely live in deitee.
He is a fool, withouten were,
That trowith have his cowntre here.
In erthe is not our cowntree,
That may these clerkis seyn and see
In Boece of Consolacioun,
Where it is makid mencoun
Of our cowntree pleyn at the eye,
By teching of philosophye,
Where lewid men might lere wit,
Whoso that wolde translaten it.
If he be siche that can wel live
Aftir his rente may him yive,
And not desyareth more to have,
That may fro povertie him save:
A wys man seide, as we may seen,
Is no man wrecched, but he it wene,
Be he king, knight, or ribaud.
And many a ribaud is mery and baud,
That swinkith, and berith, bothe day and night,
Many a burthen of gret might,
The whiche dothe him lasse offense,
for he suffrith in pacience.
They laugh and daunce, trippe and singe,
And ley not up for her living,
But in the tavern al dispendith
The winning that God hem sendith.
Than goth he, fardels for to bere,
With as good chere as he dide ere;
To swinke and traveile he not feynith,
for for to robben he disdeynith;
But right anoon, aftir his swinke,
He goth to tavern for to drinke.
Alle these ar riche in abundaunce,
That can thus have suffisaunce
Wel more than can an usurere,
As God wel knowith, withoute were.
for an usurer, so God me see,
Shal never for richesse riche bee,
But evermore pore and indigent,
Scarce, and greedy in his entent.
FOR soth it is, whom it displese,
Ther may no marchaunt live at ese,
His herte in sich a were is set,
That it quik brenneth more to get,
Ne never shal enough have geten;
Though he have gold in gerneris yeten,
for to be nedy he dredith sore.
Wherefore to geten more and more
He set his herte and his desire;
So hote he brennith in the fire
Of covetise, that makith him wood
To purchase other mennes good.
He undirfongith a gret payne,
That undirtakith to drinke up Seyne;